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ABSTRACT

This pamphlet provides an overview to help parents understand the roots of teenage drug abuse, alcohol abuse, and crime, and describes ways of enhancing the family and moving to prevent substance abuse through support packages. A section on measuring perceptions identifies eight clusters of behavior which cover the circle of what children perceive (love, loving control, control, hostile control, hostility, hostile freedom, freedom, loving freedom). Research is cited which revealed that perceptions of loving freedom, love, and loving control were associated with no substance abuse. Actions, motivation, timing, choice, and benefits are presented as five elements that impact on the child's perception of love. Parental standards and expectations, and what children must do to meet them, are discussed. Guidelines are given for effective parent-child communication. A final section considers how parents can infuse their standards and values in their children. The pamphlet concludes with descriptions of five kits designed to equip parents with the necessary tools to develop an understanding of adolescent substance abuse and to take steps to prevent substance abuse in their own children. Use of the kits with children in three age groups (4-9 years, 10-12 years, and 13-18 years) is explained. The five kits closely follow the philosophy of the document and include: (1) Perceptions; (2) Expectations and Standards; (3) The Perception of Loving and Being Loved; (4) Communications-Matching Wavelengths; and (5) Imparting Standards and Values. (NB)

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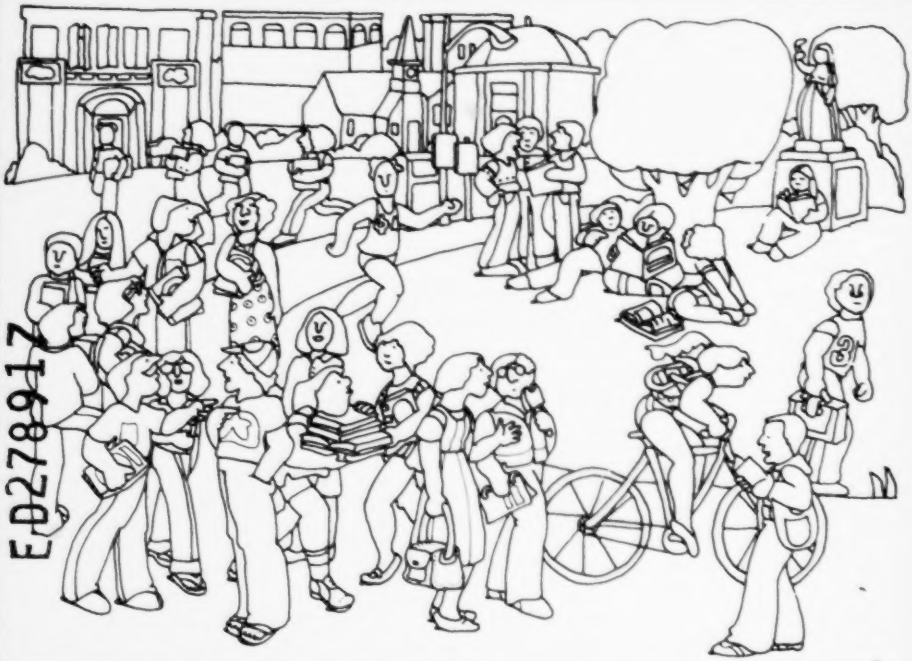

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Through My Child's Eyes

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The Search For Solutions

It began rather quietly some years ago. In the midst of many people searching for ways to thwart the tide of youth turning toward drugs, alcohol and rebellion, a small group began to chant - **Family! Family! Family!** When other strategies, both old and new, proved unsuccessful, the chant intensified.

Family!

What role does it play in causing youth problems? What is its role in the prevention and solution of these problems? What happens in the family to predict problems for the children?

Then, the national focus changed. Abruptly, the direction shifted back to law enforcement, drug education in the schools and an effort to mobilize both youth and adults to "Say no to drugs".

Listen carefully. Once again, the chant is there. The intensity is growing more rapily this time than before - **Family! Family! Family!** And this time, we are ready to show parents, schools, community leaders, clergy and everyone who wants to learn, that we know what it is in **"family"** that predicts these problems. We knew some of it before but were stymied. We didn't know what to do to help families prevent the problems when the children were young. Our knowledge was limited to what might be done when the children became teenagers. Not anymore.

The Eyes of Youth

During the early 1970s, a research study took place in Pennsylvania. Almost 6,000 teenagers anonymously answered a great many questions about school, drugs, sex, friends, religion and alienation. They were also asked if their families were:

- Very close
- Somewhat close
- Not too close
- Not close at all

Those who answered that their families were either "Not too close" or "Not close at all", also said that they were using drugs, committing crimes and drinking alcohol. They were bored, unhappy, didn't have much of a social life, didn't care about school, life, parents, the future or their religion. Clearly, there is some connection between the feeling that the family wasn't "close" and how they acted.

What then, is a close family? Caring, helping each other, love, sharing, touching, giving, nurturing, doing things together - all these and more of the good things in life are universally considered part of being in a close family. But when we really get down to it, each person sees his or her family differently. In fact, the closeness of a family is not something that we can evaluate from outside the family. The only evaluation that means anything is the way each child feels about his or her family unit. That child behaves in ways predicted by how he/she perceives the family - particularly the parents.

Measuring Perceptions

A way was needed to measure how each youngster viewed what the parent(s) were doing. By extending the work of Dr. Earl Schaefer, the researchers identified eight clusters of behavior which covered the full circle of what the children perceived. The eight clusters and the specific behaviors within them are:

Perception Clusters

LOVE	Positive evaluation, sharing, expressing affection, emotional support
LOVING CONTROL	Intellectual stimulation, being child-centered, possessiveness, protectiveness
CONTROL	Intrusiveness, suppressing anger, control through guilt strong parental direction
HOSTILE CONTROL	Strict discipline, punishment, nagging
HOSTILITY	Irritability, negative evaluation, rejection
HOSTILE FREEDOM	Neglect, being ignored
FREEDOM	Extreme freedom, lax discipline
LOVING FREEDOM	Moderate freedom, encouraging being sociable, encouraging independent thinking, being treated as an equal

Then the puzzle came together. It was possible to measure the unique way in which each child viewed his/her parents. The next step was to relate that perception to the child's actions. A new series of studies were done using questions which asked about each of the behaviors. At the same time, anonymous information about drug and alcohol use was obtained. The results were clear and intriguing. There was a strong link between the child's view of the parents and the substances they were using. The circle shows the relationship. Please note that there are many combinations of perceptions involved with each placement in the circle. **Do not ask your own questions of children and try to place them in the circle.**

As a followup study, children remanded to a juvenile detention home over the course of a year completed the same questionnaire measuring their view of their parents. No names were used. With an accuracy of 80 percent, the perception of parents by these youths predicted the type of crime they committed. The study was repeated elsewhere. The accuracy increased to 85 percent.

Now look at the circle again. Notice that the behavior clusters **LOVING FREEDOM, LOVE AND LOVING CONTROL** outline an area of no substance abuse. Apparently, love not only makes the world "go 'round", but appears to go a long way in keeping children out of trouble. We need to be clear that the LOVE discussed here is perceived by the child and may not fully depend on what the parents are doing.

Most parents will tell you that they love their children. They will also tell you that the children know they are loved. Actually, most parents don't really know what the children perceive. They assume that the child sees the love they try to convey. But do children truly perceive love?

Knowing that you love me

There are five elements that impact on the perception of love: **actions, motivation, timing, choice and benefits.**

Actions

The first ingredient in showing love is to **do something.** The actions include touching, telling, giving, hugging, kissing, buying, nurturing, feeding and listening. Your child needs some clues on which to base an estimate of being loved.

Motivation

When given some clues by the parents' actions, the child next begins to wonder about why the parents are doing it. The parent who decrees a harsh punishment while saying, "You will thank me for this" or "I am doing this for your own good", is passing along information about motivation. Depending on the amount of trust in the family, the reason may or may not be believed.

For example, a family without much money gives a modest weekly allowance to their 12-year-old son. The parents announce that because their son has done all his chores all of the time, his allowance is being increased. At the same time, the parents make subtle references to their upcoming wedding anniversary. The boy is unsure whether the increased allowance is truly a reward or just a way of helping buy a gift. Perhaps it is both. To be seen as love, the boy must decide.

Timing

Then, parents may do precisely the right thing, have the best intentions for doing it but do it at exactly the wrong time. Imagine the mother of a junior high school boy showing her pleasure at seeing her son come home from school. She asks him about the day and then enjoys a warm, loving hug. Both feel great. The next day, this mother is driving by the school and sees her son and his friends leaving school. She stops the car, says "Hello" and then insists on hugging her son. This is the same behavior as the day before. Her motivation is the same but her timing is atrocious as viewed by her son.

Choice

Surely, the son wondered if his mother had really considered what she was doing. Why didn't his mother wait till he got home? She could have offered them a ride. She might have done many other things and not embarrass him. She really didn't look into other options - at least as he perceived it.

Who benefits?

And finally, the child reviews what the parents have done and decides who benefits from it. There are parents who always sacrifice for their children believing that this is love. However, the children may believe that the sacrifice is not truly a sacrifice. Or that it is being used to build guilt as a method of control. To be seen as love, the parents need to be perceived as doing whatever they do (at that moment) for the child.

These five elements have an impact on the way love is perceived. However, there are days when we just don't love anyone. The weather is terrible. The car broke down. I can't get rid of a nose cold. I just want to be left alone. Nobody can be expected to show love all of the time. Also, it isn't likely that an adolescent expects to perceive love all of the time.

This doesn't mean there is a loss of the positive effects of perceiving love. Consider it as a savings account. Each time love is perceived, a small deposit is added. Over the years, it accumulates and adds considerable dividends. As with money, we may need to make a small withdrawal on those inevitable rainy days. And we begin to communicate that it is okay to not show nor perceive love all of the time. In fact, we begin to set standards or expectations for the way in which we wish our children to behave. To be effective, these standards, expectations or values need to be communicated and perceived by the child. How this is done clearly impacts the child's perception of parental behavior.

Standards, Expectations and Values

Upon arrival in the United States, an immigrant couple decided that the key to a happy, successful and prosperous future was in getting a college education. The couple decided that they would sacrifice and save in order that their unborn children would achieve higher education.

First they had a son. Four years later, a second son was born. Then, six years after the second son, a daughter was born. The eldest son knew what was expected of him. The parents stressed academics only and felt that social activities were frivolous. He had the talent and the parents provided the motivation and money for him to graduate from a fine college and go on to medical school. His younger brother needed little encouragement other than having a successful "big brother" as a model. When he graduated from college, he began working toward a doctoral degree in science. At the same time, the daughter was completing her sophomore year in high school.

As the parents grew older, they felt they grew wiser. They questioned whether they had pressured their sons too much. Had they been unfair and deprived them of normal adolescent fun? Did they place too much emphasis on school? grades? studying? homework? They decided to encourage their daughter to enjoy school and to get involved with many extracurricular activities. The emphasis changed from pure academics to having a good time.

The girl barely completed high school. Admitted to college as a probationary student, she had to drop out because of poor grades. When attempting to plan her future, the daughter told her parents, "You knew all along that I wasn't as smart as the boys. You knew that I couldn't make it through college. That's why you didn't push me as hard as you pushed them. You never expected me to make it and you were right."

When a mother bird forces her chicks out of the nest and into the air to fly, she doesn't worry whether her expectations are realistic or not. It's time for the young to fly and the mother bird lets them know it in direct, no nonsense terms. Parents in nature seldom make mistakes in what they expect from their young or in the way they communicate it. We humans live in a more complex world of communications. These more complex ideas require more complex language. "Give me food" is a lot easier to convey than is "Give me your love". Imagine the complexity of conveying a standard or expectation when -

1. we are not sure of what we expect nor its source, and
2. we don't know what the child has to do to live up to our standard or expectation.

Parent expectations of their children evolve from two basic sources. First, we learn what other children of the same age and sex are doing. With this information gathered from family, peers, television and others, we decide what our child should be doing in comparison to the others. To do this well, we also need to know something about our children. We need to be aware of how they are growing, developing, learning, communicating, feeling and hurting. Our expectations need to be customized to each child and then transmitted. The communication process will be discussed a little later. We're going to skip ahead here to examine what a child needs to do to live up to the parent standards and expectations.

Living Up To Expectations And Standards

For children to meet a parental expectation or standard, they MUST:

1. perceive that they have the physical, intellectual, interpersonal, emotional and moral capacity to do what is expected. If they don't believe they can do it, **they will not live up to the standard.**

2. perceive that if they do what is expected, they can be sure of what will happen. They have to be assured that what you promise will come true by meeting the expectation will actually happen. If they don't believe that it will happen, **they will not live up to the standard.**

3. perceive that what you want to happen is also what they want. If living up to the expectation will only meet your needs and not the needs of the child, **they will not live up to the standard.**

It is not possible to separate perceptions of parental behavior, perceptions of love and living up to parent expectations. They overlap, intertwine and become alternate parts of the same concept. All depend upon knowing your child and communicating your love, understanding and expectations effectively.

Perceptions Through The Senses

Many parents believe that while the children were young, communications were easy. Younger children usually accept parent statements literally. If a parent says something, it is accurate and beyond question to the younger child. The communication is one-sided in that the parent commands and children are expected to obey.

Once puberty occurs, a new language is spoken by the young. As parents and adults, we're still transmitting on the same frequency as before but now it's just not getting through. The teenager's acceptance of both the words and ideas spoken by the parent is questionable. The message needs to be more thorough and complete. Also, the parent may not assume that it will be accepted verbatim nor acted upon by the child without question. Adults assumed that they were getting through before without any conclusive proof of that success. These changes don't mean that you've failed as a parent. It means that there's more interference on the line now than before. If your communication procedures were borderline before, they're in trouble now. If the transmission lines are down, youth can't acquire the information needed to perceive that you love them nor what you expect of them.

Fortunately, discoveries during the last ten years have shown how to overcome line static, generation gaps and other problems in rebuilding communications with our adolescents. The same discoveries are also effective in creating clear communications with the very young which remain clear into and throughout adolescence. This clarity works well to assure a positive perception of love and the prevention of substance abuse.

Neuro-Linguistic Programming, as developed by John Grinder, Richard Bandler and described by Robert Dilts, states that people experience the world differently. This is because each person perceives the world based on the information he or she receives through the senses - particularly sight, sound and feelings. Most people develop the capability of one sense more than the others. An auditory person is one who depends on spoken words for the information needed to act. Visually-oriented persons primarily, but not exclusively, use their eyes to perceive the world and use visual images in remembering and thinking. A feelings-type person is one who feels his/her way through experiences making decisions more often based on gut-feel and hunches. This person truly experiences the world in an internal, feeling way.

Through the language they use, people will literally tell you which sense they are depending on to understand and communicate what's happening in their lives.

Visual	*I see what you are saying; that doesn't look quite right I need to get clear on this idea; it's sort of hazy right now; I just go blank; that casts some new light on the subject; a colorful example.*
Auditory	*I hear you; that rings a bell; it sounds good to me; listen to this; tune in to what they're saying; I asked myself*
Feelings	*I need to get a handle on this; get in touch with the flow of what's happening; it's a solid idea; that's heavy, man; can you grasp what's going on?*

Now let's examine a conversation between a parent and a child operating from different sense systems.

Child	If you'd listen to what I was saying, you'd understand why I want to go to this party. Your objections just don't make any sense to me.
Parent	*I just keep getting the feeling that something is missing. I can't put my finger on it, but there is something about the party I'd like to get a better handle on.*
Child	Listen to me. I keep telling you that the party will be fine. I just don't understand what you're telling me about it.

Parent — *Well, I just don't think you're in touch with the real party situation. There could be some heavy problems if you don't come to grips with the type of people who'll be there*

Clearly a missed communication between an auditory child and a feeling parent.

Now a quick example of thinking through the communication pattern and matching appropriate sense systems.

Child — If you'd listen to what I was saying, you'd understand why I want to go to this party. Your objections don't make any sense to me.

Parent — *I think we need to talk about this some more. I've listened to what you've had to say and it sounds like I'm missing part of it. Let's see if I can tune into you.*

Child — I can understand some of your feelings. But most of the kids that will be there you already know. Some of the old group made me feel strange too.

Parent — *Now you're coming through loud and clear. Let's talk about it after dinner. I need a little more assurance about who's going to be there.*

While this written dialogue seems artificial, it is here to illustrate that with some effort, you can identify the appropriate sensory mode both you, as a parent, and your children are using. Then, try adjusting your communication to the wave length and mode your youngster is using. You'll find some remarkable changes in communication.

Imparting Standards and Values

The ability to understand how your child sees the world and particularly, how you are seen, will have a powerful, positive impact on the way you communicate with each other. But what is the purpose of communicating with each other? Partly, to exchange information. And partly to persuade each other. As parents, one of our goals is to persuade our children to adopt our values and standards as their own. We attempt this in many ways - some more successful than others. Because we base our preventive efforts on the standard that substance abuse is unacceptable, our effort has to be to successfully persuade our children to accept that standard. Developing a special rapport with them will significantly aid that persuasive effort.

The Neuro-Linguistic Programming definition of the rapport needed to impart standards is:

> **The ability to recognize, express and enter into, without judging it, the other person's perception of the world. Rapport is not necessarily about being liked or being comfortable. It is described as being understood without being judged.**

For parents to more easily enter their child's picture of the world around them, they must place their entire conscious attention on that child. They need to allow their own behavior to be motivated or directed by what they imagine is going on inside the child. To do this, they must understand and use the sensory systems described above.

Conclusion

The chant **Family! Family! Family!** is getting louder and clearer each day. And finally now we can respond to it. Substance abuse is not the fault of parents; it is not the fault of the schools nor of the government nor of genetics. **Substance abuse exists as a method of changing the users' perceptions of their world.** They use drugs to relieve the pain or enhance their feelings of pleasure. The goal of prevention is to establish a set of perceptions when the child is young that opposes the use of substances for either psychological pain or increased pleasure. We know that the primary way to establish these perceptions is by teaching today's parents and the parents of the future to understand perceptions, expectations, love and how to communicate effectively with their offspring.

Tools for Positive Change

This booklet has provided an overview to help you understand the roots of teenage drug abuse, alcohol abuse and crime. At the same time, it will reassure you that these actions are not inevitable and that not all children are highly at risk. In medicine, we learn which preventive actions to take by treating illness and disease. To unlock the key in the family, we also started with the illnesses of substance abuse and crime. Now we have a path to prevention.

Insight is helpful. However, it doesn't often provide the tools needed to change and improve a situation or relationship. Upon developing the insight into your child's perception, this booklet offers you specific tools for a lasting, positive change. No scripts are provided. Instead, you will discover ways to assure that your message is received and understood by the child. Your child's communication to you will also come through clearly and without the garbled static of a generation gap. Also, the mystery of transmitting standards and values is revealed. Each tool is tailor made to help you with an adolescent and the problems of that second decade of growing up. In-depth testing and direction in each of these topics can be ordered separately and are described here.

The following kits were designed to equip you with the necessary tools to develop an understanding of the roots of teenage substance abuse and to take steps to prevent it from happening to your children. There are five kits available at this time.

Since the age of the children and the needs of each family are different, we suggest the kits be used in specific sequences. Among children between the **ages of 4 and 9 years,** we suggest first using Kit T-204 and then Kit T-205. We believe the children are too young to benefit from the other kits.

Among children between the **ages of 10 and 12 years,** , we believe all the kits can be used effectively. The sequences suggested is T-204, T-205, T-201, T-203, T-202.

Among children between the **ages of 13 and 18 years,** the suggested sequence of kit usage is T-204, T-205, T-203, T-202, T-201.

Perceptions
Kit T-201

Perceptions Kit (T-201) provides a way of measuring the differences between what children and their parents perceive. The child is asked how the parents treat him/her in specific areas. Each parent completes similar questionnaires. Then, using a special analysis system, the results are compared. This provides a way for parents and children to understand how the same situations can be interpreted differently. A baseline is determined so that change can be measured.

Expectations and Standards
Kit T-202

In this kit, comparisons are made between what each parent expects and how the child views those expectations. The analysis system helps determine if there are problems resulting from the parent expectations or in the child's ability to live up to those expectations. The results help families clarify what is expected. It also provides insight into providing resources to help the child accomplish the expectations.

The Perception of Loving and Being Loved
Kit T-203

The world's literature abounds with tales of of those who love but are not loved in return. Unrequited love is a truly unhappy state of mind. Among children who do not believe they are loved, there is a greater rate of substance abuse and problem behavior. In many cases, parents do love their children and believe their children know it. However, it is also possible that parents love their children and the children fail to perceive it. This kit helps determine whether the child perceives love from his/her parents. Analysis of the information enables a family to find new ways of communicating the love they feel for each other. This kit considerably expands the section of Kit T-201 which gathers some information on the child's perception of love. It may be used alone or following Kit T-201.

Communications-Matching Wavelengths
Kit T-204

Educators have long known that people use many different learning styles. Only recently has it become clear that different learning styles are also involved in our ability to communicate with each other. Some people are clearly visual in orientation while others are auditory. Some focus on feelings in contrast to visual or auditory. This kit enables parents to determine their communication/learning style and determine if it matches their child's. Effectively matching styles assures that the message will be understood.

Imparting Standards & Values
Kit T-205

Rapport is the ability to recognize, talk about but not judge the other person's perception of the world. This is particularly difficult for parents in dealing with their children. Parents are quick to believe they recognize how their child sees the world. Then, they talk about it with the child. However, most are prone to judge that perception rather harshly. This kit provides tools to find those special ways of developing rapport between parent and child. It helps tie together the results of these five kits and enable parents to signficantly reduce the likelihood of future substance abuse among their children. The kit also increases the opportunity for parents to use their persuasive powers to infuse their standards and values in their children.

About the author. . .

Dr. Fred Streit has spent the last 15 years in the area of research involving the adolescent in education, drug and alcohol problems and criminal justice. His special interest has been researching and evaluating preventive efforts in these areas.

He has been a consultant and adviser on drug problems to the House of Representatives Select Committee on Narcotics and Drug Abuse Control, the Special Action Office of the White House, the National Institute on Drug Abuse, the Navajo Nation, the NJ Governor's Commission on Physical Fitness and Sports and many state and local authorities. He has authored more than 60 pamphlets and about 45 professional articles.

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